Helping Skills

Block 16
Sexual Assault Response Coordinator Training

A Healing Relationship

The core experiences of psychological trauma are disempowerment and disconnection from others. Recovery, therefore, is based upon empowerment of the survivor and the creation of new connections. Recovery can take place only within the context of relationships; it cannot occur in isolation.

Judith Herman, 1992, Trauma and Recovery, p. 133

Our Role

- Engage the survivor in a healing, interpersonal process
- Help the survivor use whatever internal and external resources are available
- Provide support, empowerment, education, and access to resources
- Offer Crisis Intervention
  - NOT clinical intervention
  - NOT treatment of an illness

Interpersonal Process

- In a positive interpersonal process, the survivor feels
  - Respected and validated
  - A positive, trusting connection with the advocate
  - A sense of hope
  - Increasing empowerment and effectiveness

Crisis Intervention

1. Ensure Safety and Security
2. Explain Your Role
3. Listen and Validate
4. Prepare for What Comes Next

Crisis Intervention

1. Ensure Safety and Security

   Are you safe right now?

   - Physical safety
   - Emergency medical needs
   - Sense or feeling of safety

Crisis Intervention

2. Explain Your Role

- Introduce yourself and what you do
- Share information about reporting options, confidentiality and its limits
- Give opportunities to regain control
  - Start with small things and simple questions:
    - What would you like me to call you?
    - Would you like some water?

Crisis Intervention

3. Listen and Validate

- Allow survivor to find words to describe the experience and reactions:
  "The power found in putting words to feelings and facts is tremendous…survivors often feel a sense of liberation – a sense of permission to feel such intense emotions" Young, 2001, *Crisis Intervention*
- Normalize the reactions and emotions:
  - "It is normal to …"
  - "It is not uncommon for survivors to …"
  - "Many survivors…"

Crisis Intervention

4. Prepare for What Comes Next

- Share practical information about what has happened and what will happen, including:
  - Investigative and Legal Process
  - Medical
  - Possible or likely emotional reactions
  - Follow up contact
- Review all options so survivor can make informed decisions about what is best for him/her

Goals of Crisis Communication

- Allow the survivor to talk freely and frankly
- Help the survivor to talk about what is important in the present situation
- Obtain background information about the problem
- Help the survivor to understand the crisis
- Assist the survivor to find alternatives to resolve the problem

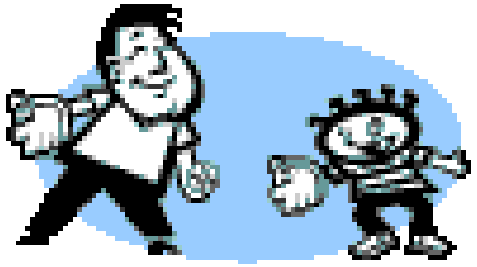
Exercise 16.1:

Introductions

Communication and Active Listening Skills

Three Essential Elements In Human Communications

A sender → A message → A receiver



Highly Effective Listeners

- Create a safe environment
- Build rapport
- Focus on relevant issues and people, i.e. the here and now
- Care about people
- Are honest and genuine
- Display empathy
- Express themselves clearly
- Can cope with strong emotions
- Demonstrate unconditional acceptance, regardless of beliefs, ideas, or conduct

Characteristics of Active Listening

- Listening to hear, not to answer
- Paying attention to the total communications (verbal and non-verbal)
- Attending to the words being spoken
- Being empathetic to thoughts and feelings
- Suspending one's own thoughts and feelings to give attention solely to listening

Active Listening Tools

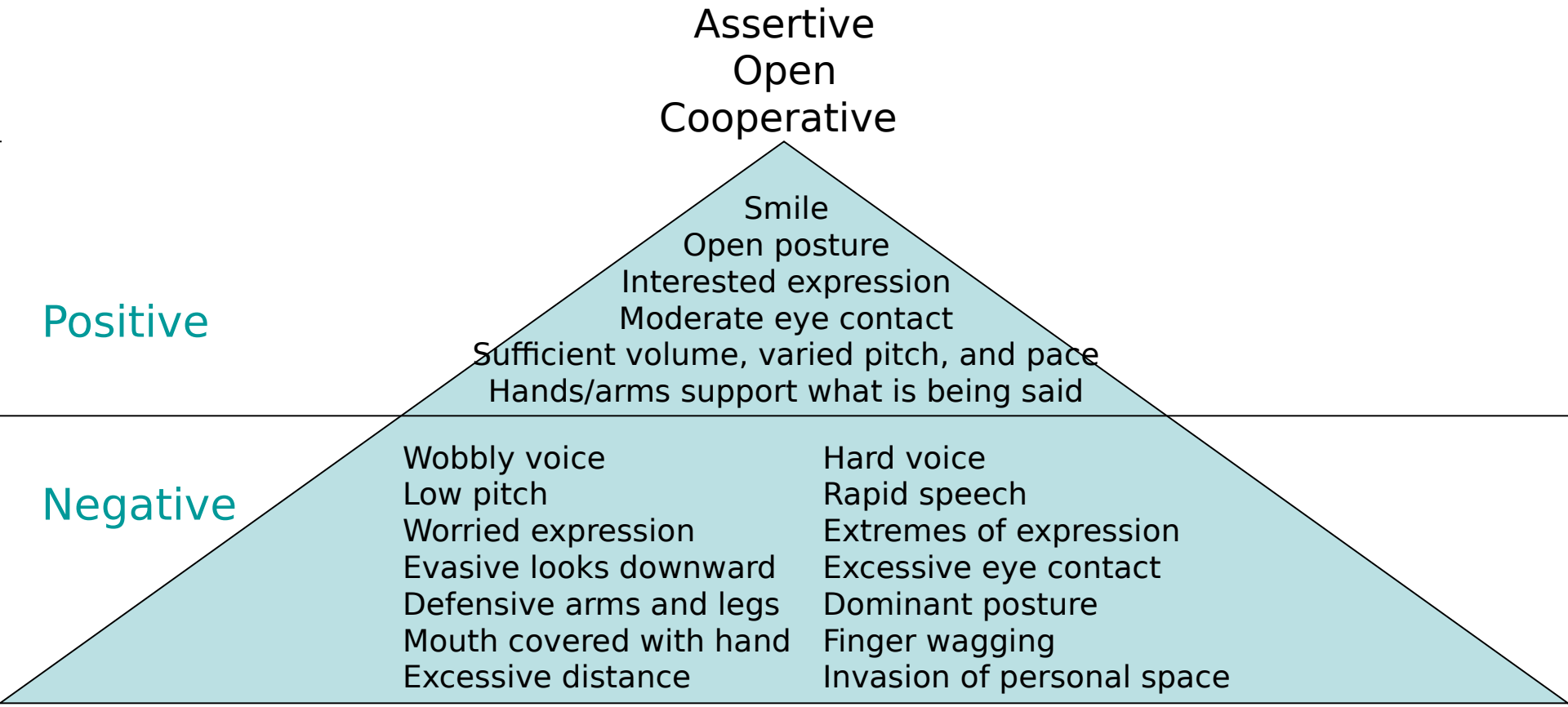
- Nonverbal communication
- Silence
- Asking questions
- Paraphrasing, clarifying
- Perception checking
- Reflecting feelings
- Problem solving

Forms of Nonverbal Communication

- Posture
- Body orientation
- Facial expressions
- Gestures
- Touching
- Clothing
- Personal boundaries
- Voice
- Tone and inflection
- Physical appearance

Nonverbal behavior sends a powerful message. Often, the first impression you make is based upon how you look. The challenge is how to make that impression useful in the service of crisis intervention.

Body Language



Silence

- Allows survivor to set pace and direction of the conversation
- Reassures that you are willing to listen
- Gives time for survivor for cry, gather thoughts, breathe, etc.

- Caution! Too much silence suggests lack of interest or discomfort.

Rocking

- Allows the survivor to know you are listening without interrupting
- Allows survivor to proceed at own pace and direct the conversation
- Use phrases like “uh-huh” or “I see”

Feeling Reflection

- Stating the facts and the feelings involved, demonstrating understanding and acknowledgement:
  - It sounds like you feel…
  - You seem…
  - You sound…
- Can help bring emotions into focus
- Inaccuracy is ok as it may afford further exploration

Door Openers

- Invites the survivor to share more fully while letting him/her decide how much additional information to share:
  - I'd like to hear more about…
  - Would you like to talk about that?
  - Tell me more.
  - What made you contact the SARC?

Paraphrasing and Clarifying

- Paraphrasing is restating the basic message in similar but fewer words to allow for accurate understanding.
- Clarifying helps gain more information in order to fully understand:
  - Do you mean…?
  - Let me make sure I'm following.
  - Help me understand.

Perception Checking

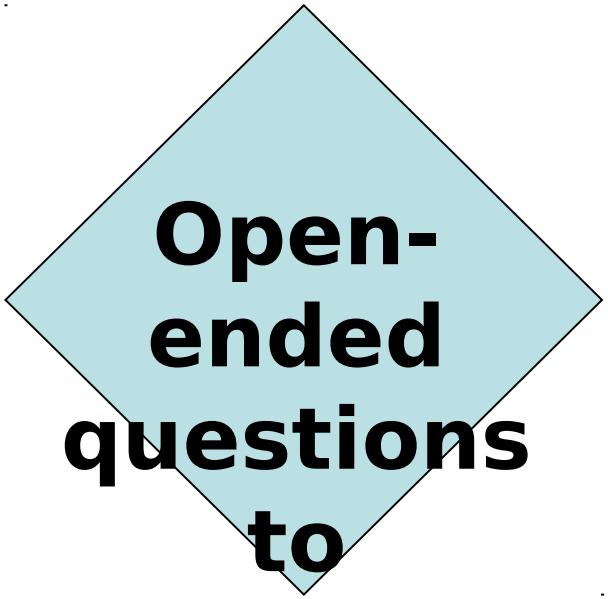
- Asking for verification or correction of what you perceive the situation to be, especially when the non-verbal message does not match the words:
  - You said you don't mind but your voice sounds shaky, like you're upset.
  - I'm wondering if this plan is what you really want to do; I'm hearing some doubt in your voice.

Types of Questions

- Directive questions
  - Direct or focus responses
  - Provide structure
  - Close-ended, yes/no, or multiple choice
- Non-directive questions
  - Provide maximal response options
  - Does not restrict answers
  - Open-ended

Diamond Structure for Asking Questions

Establish Facts with Closed-end



Paraphrase to Summarize With Yes - No

Exercises 16.2 and 16.3:

What are the Unspoken Feelings?

and

Opening Closed Questions

Problem Solving

- We are listeners and brain-stormers, NOT decision-makers
- We can make suggestions, review options

- We **do not** give advice because
  - We do not have to live with the consequences
  - Survivors know what will work best for them
  - It is disempowering

A Healing Relationship

In her renewed connections with other people, the survivor re-creates the psychological faculties that were damaged or deformed by the traumatic experience. These faculties include the basic capacities for trust, autonomy, initiative, competence, identity, and intimacy.

Judith Herman, 1992, Trauma and Recovery, p. 133

Goal of Problem Solving

- Assessing the survivor's resources to address the issue
- Assessing community resources available to address the issue
- Formulating a plan with implementation steps

Problem Solving Strategies

- Discuss pro's and con's
  - What is the best thing that could happen if…?
  - What is the worst thing if…?
- Make suggestions
  - What do you think about…
  - How would you feel if…
- Find out what s/he thinks
  - What would you like to do?
  - What have you thought about doing?

Problem Solving Strategies

- Identify obstacles
  - What's stopping you from…?
- Help un-stick
  - What have you done in a similar situation?
  - What would you tell a friend to do?
  - If you could wave a magic wand, what would be different?

Developing a Plan

- What would a good situation look like?
- What would need to change?
- What are the steps necessary to make that change?
- What help would you need to take these steps?
- Who could provide you with support as you take these steps?

"I" Statements

- Used in special circumstances when you need to let the survivor know how a statement impacts you or to express serious concerns
  - I feel…
  - when you…
  - because…

Exercise 16.4:

Expressing Your Need

1. Stop talking
2. Put the talker at ease
3. Show him/her you want to listen
4. Remove distractions
5. Empathize
6. Be patient
7. Hold your temper
8. Forgo argument and criticism
9. Ask questions
10. Stop talking

Blocks To Listening

- Judging
- Comparing
- Mind reading
- Rehearsing
- Filtering
- Day dreaming
- Lecturing
- Preaching
- Identifying
- Advising
- Sparring
- Diagnosing
- Derailing
- Placating
- Ordering
- Being right

Exercise 16.5:

Role Plays 1

Containment and Grounding

- Intense emotions are normal, necessary, and often scary
- When someone is intensely upset, they need room to express their emotions and a way to re-anchor themselves
  - Permit emotional expression
    - Make room for the natural arc of emotion
  - Validate their feelings

Grounding Techniques

- Remind them where they are and that they are safe.
- Begin talking quietly and gradually increase volume to regular tone – don't shout.
- Have person describe surroundings:
  - Describe the room you're in right now.
  - What do you see? What color is…? What does it feel like?

Grounding Techniques

- Depending on circumstances, you can also try:
  - Humor
  - Deep breathing exercises
  - Distraction
  - Focus on the do-able
  - Encourage positive coping skills, including accessing supportive people and resources

Safety Planning

- Has the survivor taken care of his/her body?
  - Injuries?
  - STI treatment?
  - Pregnancy treatment?

Safety Planning

- Surroundings
  - Is the place where the survivor will be going/staying a safe place?
  - Have doors or windows been compromised so that unauthorized entry can be gained? Does the perpetrator have a key?
  - Is there an alternate place where the survivor could go and feel safe?

Safety Planning

- Sense of Safety
  - Is there a person who the survivor could spend time with in order to feel safe?
  - Is there a physical object the survivor could carry with him/her to feel safe?
  - Is there a mental image/visualization that may make him/her feel safe?

Safety Planning

- Coping Skills
  - Encourage positive/healthy coping skills
  - Is there a history of unhealthy coping or risk taking behaviors?:
    - Substance abuse
    - Eating disorders
    - Self-injury (ex. Cutting, scratching, burning)
- Does survivor have homicidal or suicidal thoughts?

Suicide Screening Vs Assessment

1. "Are you thinking about killing yourself?"
2. If yes, "have you thought about how you would do it?"
   - Ask questions to find out how detailed the plan is
3. Assess risk
4. Seek help, refer appropriately, notify others

Suicide Risk Screening

	Low	Moderate	High
Method	Undecided	Decided	Decided
Means	Not present	Easy access	In possession
Time and place	Not chosen	Tentative	Chosen
Lethality	Low	Moderate	High
Preparation	None	Some planning	Steps taken
Hopelessness	Mild	Moderate	Severe
Future plans	Yes	Unclear	No
Social Supports	Identifiable, avail, & willing to access	Limited number and willingness	None and unwilling
Connection with others	Regular social contacts	Some social contact	Isolated and withdrawn

Remember

- Always ask! You cannot put the idea of suicide into someone's head.
- Suicidal people are ambivalent about death but do not see other options.
- Seek help and additional training on suicide from local resources.

Exercise 16.6:

Role Plays 2